



Photos by Airman Bradley Lail

Airman 1st Class Kristylen Kerns, 39th Security Forces Squadron, is helped by Staff Sgt. Lakeisha Toney, 39th Medical Squadron, Sept. 24 during Incirlik's third week-long exercise. The members of the 39th Air Base Wing put on make up and fake blood for an exercise for the First Response Team.

Airman from the 39th Civil Engineer Squadron block off a site where an unexploded ordinance was found during the exercise. Once a UXO is located, it has to be blocked off to keep others from getting close to it.



# As more and more Incirlik Airmen prepare for upcoming deployments, Team Incirlik must train and exercise as realistically as possible ... Lives depend on it

By Staff Sgt. Shanda De Anda  
39th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

Incirlik organizations had the opportunity to put their knowledge, checklists and training into practice during exercise scenarios Sept. 20 through Sept. 24. Throughout exercise week, 39th Air Base Wing Airmen responded to several scenarios, each of which brought into play events that could happen here or during downrange deployments.

"We exercised the entire spectrum – beginning with mobility and NEO (Noncombatant Evacuation Operation) exercises to get Airmen to the fight and families out of harm's way, to accomplishing our mission during a natural disaster and executing our wartime tasks while under attack in chemical operations," said Maj. Robert McNease, 39th ABW plans and readiness chief and Exercise Evaluation Team chief.

"The focus of the exercise program is to evaluate the effectiveness of our training, although some instruction occurs when EET members switch roles from evaluator to instructor and even motivator," Major McNease continued. "There is also a whole lot of learning as everyone discovers something new during these exercises."

This exercise was particularly important because this is the first time many people, who may have arrived during the high turnover of the summer and are new to Team Incirlik, have had this type of exposure in the unique environment at Incirlik. The result of so many new faces in the 39th ABW to this exercise may result in some areas for improvement, but overall helps Airmen get one step closer to improving combat readiness.

"For Team Incirlik, this exercise helped provide an assessment of the overall combat-readiness of our Airmen," said Col. Michael Gardiner, 39th ABW commander. "Our people showed a good level of effort, but we still have a long way to go. Airmen must remain focused and train as realistically as possible, which includes executing functions with the sense of urgency the situation demands."

Exercising with a sense of urgency and as realistically as possible are part of what helps make Airmen better able to respond to and return home safely from real-world contingencies and deployments. Five Airmen from the 39th Logistics Readiness Squadron recently returned from a deployment to Iraq. The deployment, which lasted from May

through September, provided an environment for the real-world application of the training and exercise scenarios they experienced at Incirlik and throughout their Air Force careers.

"Exercises helped bring insight and understanding on going from training to the real thing," said Airman 1st Class Ann Berry, 39th LRS passenger travel specialist. "It gave me the knowledge of what needs to be done and how to handle certain situations and how to handle myself in those situations."

These LRS Airmen were stationed at a location where receiving real-world attacks was a daily occurrence and body armor was part of the uniform of the day. A location where taking cover at a moments notice, ensuring 100 percent accountability after attacks, and battling the emotional toll of treating casualties and injuries of fellow Airmen was the norm, not a 12-hour shift during an exercise.

"Practicing a sense of urgency during exercises is very important," said Airman Berry.

Using a sense of urgency during training does help, "even though your natural instinct also comes into play when actually exposed," continued Staff Sgt. Kathleen Kar, 39th LRS quality control inspector. "Urgency becomes a natural reaction when people are actually trying to kill you with real mortars. When one sees, hears and feels the surrounding explosions, then seeing or hearing about the after effects, a hard but true reality sets in of the immediate danger that constantly surrounds you."

"We were attacked daily, but the one that opened my eyes the most was a rocket that landed a few tents from mine," said Staff Sgt. Tonya Hodges, 39th LRS logistics planner and war reserve material NCO in charge. "We all evacuated, but when I evacuated, I looked in all directions to make sure no UXOs were present and to the right of me there was a rocket sticking out of the ground and all I could think of was to evacuate all the other tents I could and get to safety – luckily it was a dud and no one was hurt in this attack."

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Airmen here and especially during deployments need "to always stay vigilant and never become complacent," Said Sergeant Hodges. "Also, react in an expedient manner when something is going on, stay alert and always use the buddy system – believe me, you will need this."



Left: 39th Air Base Wing Turkish firefighters simulate putting out a fire on a car that "exploded" during a first response exercise.

Below: Staff Sgt. Daniel Gonzalez, helps Airman 1st Class Tylor Shellenberger put on his chemical gear during the exercise Thursday. Both are from the 39th Communications Squadron.



Airman Edwin Colon, 39th Security Forces Squadron, gets a neck brace put on him by Turkish firefighters during the exercise.